Rev. A. Rogers

4486.e.53.
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Dr. COOPER'S SERMON ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE Conſtitution, &c.

1780.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY

JOHN HANCOCK, ESQ;

GOVERNOUR,

THE HONOURABLE THE

SENATE,

AND

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH

OF

MASSACHUSETTS,

OCTOBER 25, 1780.

BEING THE DAY OF THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION,

AND

INAUGURATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

BY SAMUEL COOPER, D.D.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS:
PRINTED BY T. AND J. FLEET, AND J. GILL.

In the Houſe of Repreſentatives, June 24, 1780.

ORDERED, That Colonel *Dawes* and Major *Oſgood*, with ſuch as the Honourable Board ſhall join, be a Committee to inform the Rev. Dr. COOPER that the two Houſes have made choice of him to preach a Sermon on the laſt Wedneſday of October next, being the firſt Day of General Election under the new Conſtitution.

Sent up for Concurrence,

JOHN HANCOCK, Speaker.

In Council, June 4, 1780,

Read and concurred, and *Thomas Cuſhing*, Eſq; is joined.

JOHN AVERY, Dep. Secr'y.

Conſented to by the Major Part of the Council.

A true Copy,

Atteſt. JOHN AVERY, Dep. Secr'y.

The Commonwealth of Maſſachuſetts.

In the Houſe of Repreſentatives, October 26, 1780.

ORDERED, That Mr. *Lowell* and Col. *Dawes* be appointed a Committee, with ſuch as the Honourable Senate ſhall join, to wait on the Rev. Doct. COOPER and return him the Thanks of both Houſes for his Sermon Yeſterday delivered before the General Aſſembly, and to requeſt a Copy thereof for the Preſs.

Sent up for Concurrence,

CALEB DAVIS, Speaker.

In Senate, October 30, 1780.

Read and concurred, and *Abraham Fuller*, Eſq; is joined on the part of the Senate.

THOMAS CUSHING, Preſident.

True Copy,

Atteſt. JOHN AVERY, Secr'y.

A SERMON, &c.

XXXth JEREMIAH, 20, 21 Ver.

"Their Congregation ſhall
"be eſtabliſhed before me:
"and their Nobles ſhall be
"of themſelves, and their
"Governor ſhall proceed
"from the midſt of them."

NOTHING can be more applicable to the ſolemnity in which we are engaged, than this paſſage of ſacred writ. The Prophecy ſeems to have been made for ourſelves, it is ſo exactly deſcriptive of that important, that comprehenſive, that eſſential civil bleſſing, which kindles the luſtre, and diffuſes the joy of the preſent day. Nor is this the only

paſſage of holy Scripture that holds up to our view a ſtriking reſemblance between our own circumſtances and thoſe of the antient Iſraelites; a nation choſen by God a theatre for the diſplay of ſome of the moſt aſtoniſhing diſpenſations of his Providence. Like that nation we roſe from oppreſſion, and emerged "from the Houſe of Bondage": Like that nation we were led into a wilderneſs, as a refuge from tyranny, and a preparation for the enjoyment of our civil and religious rights: Like that nation we have been purſued through the ſea, by the armed hand of power, which, but for the ſignal interpoſitions of Heaven, muſt before now have totally defeated the noble purpoſe of our emigration: And, to omit many other inſtances of ſimilarity, like that nation we have been ungrateful to the Supreme Ruler of the world, and too "lightly eſteemed the Rock of our Salvation"; accordingly, we have been corrected by his juſtice, and at the ſame time remarkably ſupported and defended by his mercy: So that we may diſcern our own picture in the figure of the antient church divinely exhibited to Moſes in viſion, "a buſh burning and not conſumed." This day, this memorable day, is a witneſs, that the Lord, He whoſe

"hand

"hand maketh great, and giveth ſtrength unto all, hath not forſaken us, nor our God forgotten us." This day, which forms a new æra in our annals, exhibits a teſtimony to all the world, that contrary to our deſerts, and amidſt all our troubles, the bleſſing promiſed in our text to the afflicted ſeed of Abraham is come upon us; "Their Nobles ſhall be of themſelves, and their Governor ſhall proceed from the midſt of them."

This Prophecy has an immediate reſpect to the deliverance of the Jews from the cruel oppreſſions of the king of Babylon. Their ſufferings, when they fell under the power of this haughty tyrant, as they are repreſented to us in ſacred hiſtory, muſt harrow a boſom ſoftened with the leaſt degree of humanity. They give us a frightful picture of the effects of deſpotic power, guided and inflamed by thoſe luſts of the human heart with which it is ſeldom unaccompanied. Can we forbear weeping for human nature, or bluſhing for its degradation, when we view either the ſufferer or the actor in ſuch a ſcene; the relentleſs oppreſſor, or thoſe who are "ſore broken in the place of dragons?" What can be more pathetic than the deſcription of it

given by the ſame Prophet who gave the conſolation in our text. "How doth the "city ſit ſolitary that was full of people? "How is ſhe become as a widow: ſhe that "was great among the nations, and princeſs "among the provinces? She weepeth ſore "in the night, and her tears are on her "cheeks; ſhe hath none to comfort her; "her friends have dealt treacherouſly with "her. Judah is gone into captivity; be-"cauſe of affliction, and becauſe of great "ſervitude, ſhe findeth no reſt. Her "mighty men are trodden under foot; "her young men are cruſhed; the young "and the old lie on the ground in the "ſtreets—Mine eyes do fail with tears; "my bowels are troubled, my liver is "poured on the earth, for the deſtruction "of the daughter of my people."

Such are the fruits of lawleſs and deſpotic power in a mortal man intoxicated with it: Such deſolations does it make in the earth —Such havock in the family of God, merely for the ſake of enlarging it's bounds and impreſſing its terror on the human boſom. It often, indeed, claims a divine original, and impudently ſupports itſelf not barely on the permiſſion, but the expreſs deſignation of him "whoſe tender mercies

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are over all his works;" though it exactly reſembles the grand adverſary of God and man, and is only a "roaring lion that ſeeketh whom he may devour." To plead a divine right for ſuch a power is truly to teach "the doctrine of devils." It covets every thing without bounds: It graſps every thing without pity: It riots on the ſpoils of innocence and induſtry: It is proud to annihilate the rights of mankind; to deſtroy the faireſt conſtitutions of wiſdom, policy and juſtice, the broadeſt ſources of human happineſs: While it enſlaves the bodies, it debaſes the minds of the offspring of God: In its progreſs it changes the very face of nature, it withers even the fruits of the earth, and fruſtrates the bounties of our common parent. "Before it is the garden of God, behind it is a deſolate wilderneſs."

Looking upon the Jews when groaning under ſuch a power; their armies vanquiſhed; the flower of their country cut off by the ſword; their fortreſſes reduced; their cities in aſhes; their land ravaged; their temple and worſhip deſtroyed, and the remnant of the nation led in chains to a foreign land; who would have thought that in a few years, theſe cities and this

temple

temple ſhould riſe again from their ruins, and a people ſo totally enſlaved and widely diſperſed be reſtored to their rights and poſſeſſions, their laws and inſtitutions; peace, liberty and plenty daily augmenting their numbers, and lighting up the face of joy through their whole land; while the haughty empire of Babylon, from which they had ſuffered ſo much, ſhould ſet to riſe no more! Such, however, were the decrees of Heaven; ſuch the predictions of the inſpired Prophets; and ſuch the event.

" Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, I will " break his yoke from off thy neck, and " will burſt thy bonds, and ſtrangers ſhall " no more ſerve themſelves of thee; but " thou ſhalt ſerve the Lord thy God: and " the city ſhall be builded upon her own " heap, and they ſhall come and ſing in " the height of Zion: And fields ſhall " be bought in this land whereof ye ſay it " is deſolate, it is given into the hand of " the Chaldeans—men ſhall buy fields for " money. And they that devour thee " ſhall be devoured; and they that ſpoil " thee ſhall be a ſpoil. And out of Judah " ſhall proceed thankſgiving and the voice " of them that make merry: and I will " multiply them and they ſhall not be few;

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" I will alſo glorify them and they ſhall not
" be ſmall. Their children alſo ſhall be as
" aforetime, and their congregation, their
" religious and civil aſſemblies, ſhall be
" eſtabliſhed before me: and I will puniſh
" all that oppreſs them: and their Nobles
" ſhall be of themſelves, and their Gover-
" nor ſhall proceed from the midſt of
" them, and I will cauſe him to draw
" near, and he ſhall approach unto me."

When Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land of Judea, and brought upon it ſuch devaſtations and miſeries, it was governed by a King, who ſhared in the captivity of his ſubjects, and was led with them by the conqueror in chains to Babylon. But in the happy reſtoration promiſed in our text, it is obſervable, that the royal part of their government was not to be renewed. No mention is made in this refreſhing prediction of a King, but only of Nobles, men of principal character and influence, who were to *be of themſelves*, and ſuch as they would chuſe to conduct their affairs; and a Governor, who ſhould alſo *proceed from the midſt of them*, and preſide over all, cloathed with a tempered authority and dignity, not with arbitary power, and the means of gratifying an unbounded avarice and ambition.

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The form of government originally eſtabliſhed in the Hebrew nation by a charter from Heaven, was that of a free republic, over which God himſelf, in peculiar favour to that people, was pleaſed to preſide. It conſiſted of three parts; a chief magiſtrate who was called judge or leader, ſuch as Joſhua and others, a council of ſeventy choſen men, and the general aſſemblies of the people. Of theſe the two laſt were the moſt eſſential and permanent, and the firſt more occaſional, according to the particular circumſtances of the nation. Their Council or Sanhedrim, remained with but little ſuſpenſion, through all the viciſſitudes they experienced, till after the commencement of the chriſtian æra. And as to the aſſemblies of the people, that they were frequently held by divine appointment, and conſidered as the fountain of civil power, which they exerted by their own decrees, or diſtributed into various channels as they judged moſt conducive to their own ſecurity, order, and happineſs, is evident beyond contradiction from the ſacred hiſtory. Even the law of Moſes, though framed by God himſelf, was not impoſed upon that people againſt their will; it was laid open before the whole congregation of Iſrael; they freely adopted it, and it became their law, not only by

divine

divine appointment, but by their own voluntary and expreſs conſent. Upon this account it is called in the ſacred writings a *Covenant*, compact, or mutual ſtipulation.

A ſolemn renewal of this covenant was the very laſt public act of Joſhua their renowned leader. "He gathered all the tribes of Iſrael to Sechem, and called for the elders of Iſrael, and for the heads and for the judges, and for their officers, and they preſented themſelves before God." The occaſion was great and important; being nothing leſs than to renew their acceptance of the conſtitution they had received from Heaven, and ſolemnly to confirm the national compact. How auguſt was this aſſembly of a great nation, it's repreſentatives and magiſtrates of every order, with their brave and faithful leader at their head; He, who had been foremoſt to face the dangers of their cauſe, who had fought ſo many battles for their happy ſettlement, and rendered ſuch various and important ſervices to his country. In a ſhort but nervous and pathetic addreſs to the aſſembly, he reminded them of their ſmall original; of the peculiar favors granted by Heaven to their progenitors; of their remarkable deliverance from the ſlavery of Egypt; of the wonders wrought for them by a divine hand in their

progreſs thro' the wilderneſs; in their conqueſts on the borders of Canaan, and their firm poſſeſſion of that promiſed land. Deeply impreſſed with this intereſting recollection, he warmly declares his own reſolution to abide by that noble cauſe for which they had been led by Heaven from an ignominious and ſervile dependence, and formed into a diſtinct and reſpectable nation. But as the memorable act of the day depended intirely on the conſent of the people, he accordingly refers the matter to their own free determination. "Chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve." It was impoſſible for the people not to be moved by ſuch an addreſs; not to diſcern the excellency of the moſaic conſtitutions; how well they were adapted to the particular circumſtances of the nation, and the noble purpoſes they were deſigned to promote. The people replied, *the Lord our God we will ſerve*; we conſent, and are determined to be governed by the laws and the ſtatutes he has been ſo graciouſly pleaſed to afford us. "Then Joſhua ſaid unto the people, ye are witneſſes againſt yourſelves that ye have choſen the Lord to ſerve him; and they ſaid, we are witneſſes." If ever we renounce the conſtitution and happy ſettlement granted to us by Heaven; if ever

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we break the ſacred compact ; this day, and all the public and voluntary tranſactions of it, muſt be a witneſs againſt us. "Thus Joſhua made a covenant with the people at Sechem", which, we are afterwards told, he recorded in a book, and at the ſame time erected a monumental ſtone upon the ſpot, as a memorial of theſe ſacred ſtipulations, and as a perpetual teſtimony, that the Supreme Ruler himſelf had not eſtabliſhed their polity without their own free concurrence, and that the Hebrew nation, lately redeemed from tyranny, had now a civil and religious conſtitution of their own choice, and were governed by laws to which they had given their ſolemn conſent.

To mention all the paſſages in ſacred writ which prove that the Hebrew government, tho' a theocracy, was yet as to the outward part of it, a free republic, and that the ſovereignty reſided in the people, would be to recite a large part of it's hiſtory. I will therefore only add a ſingle inſtance. When the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manaſſah had erected a ſeparate altar, tho' it afterwards appeared with no bad intention, all the other tribes were extremely alarmed, and being met in General Aſſembly, determined

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to make war on their offending brethren. But previous to the intended aſſault they agreed to ſend an embaſſy to expoſtulate with them on the occaſion. Phinehaz and ten princes, or principal men, were appointed for this purpoſe. Here was an act of ſovereignty, and an act of the higheſt importance to the intereſt of any nation, involving in it nothing leſs than the power of making peace or war. It was not done by Joſhua, tho' he was then alive; it was an act of the congregation of Iſrael: The embaſſy upon this momentous matter was choſen, commiſſioned, and inſtructed by them. "As it was democratically ſent, ſays a great author, * who wrote concluſively, who fought bravely, and died glorioufly in the eauſe of liberty, it was democratically received: It was not directed to one man, but to all the children of Reuben, Gad and Manaſſah, and the anſwer was ſent by them all." The report was made to the congregation, who finally determined the grand queſtion, and decided for peace.

Such was the civil conſtitution of the Hebrew nation, till growing weary of the gift of Heaven, they demanded a King. After being admoniſhed by the Prophet Samuel of the ingratitude and folly of their requeſt,

* See *Algernon Sidney* upon Government.

requeſt, they were puniſhed in the grant of it. Impiety, corruption and diſorder of every kind afterwards increaſing among them, they grew ripe for the judgments of Heaven in their deſolation and captivity. Taught by theſe judgments the value of thoſe bleſſings they had before deſpiſed, and groaning under the hand of tyranny more heavy than that of death, they felt the worth of their former civil and religious privileges, and were prepared to receive with gratitude and joy a reſtoration not barely to the land flowing with milk and honey, but to the moſt precious advantage they ever enjoyed in that land, their original conſtitution of government: They were prepared to welcome with the voice of mirth and thankſgiving the re-eſtabliſhment of their congregations; nobles choſen from among themſelves, and a governor proceeding from the midſt of them.

Such a conſtitution, twice eſtabliſhed by the hand of Heaven in that nation, ſo far as it reſpects civil and religious liberty in general, ought to be regarded as a ſolemn recognition from the Supreme Ruler himſelf of the rights of human nature. Abſtracted from thoſe appendages and formalities which were peculiar to the Jews,

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and deſigned to anſwer ſome particular purpoſes of divine Providence, it points out in general what kind of government infinite wiſdom and goodneſs would eſtabliſh among mankind.

We want not, indeed, a ſpecial revelation from Heaven to teach us that men are born equal and free; that no man has a natural claim of dominion over his neighbours, nor one nation any ſuch claim upon another; and that as government is only the adminiſtration of the affairs of a number of men combined for their own ſecurity and happineſs, ſuch a ſociety have a right freely to determine by whom and in what manner their own affairs ſhall be adminiſtered. Theſe are the plain dictates of that reaſon and common ſenſe with which the common parent of men has informed the human boſom. It is, however, a ſatisfaction to obſerve ſuch everlaſting maxims of equity confirmed, and impreſſed upon the conſciences of men, by the inſtructions, precepts, and examples given us in the ſacred oracles; one internal mark of their divine original, and that they come from him "who hath made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth," whoſe authority ſanctifies only thoſe governments

governments that inſtead of oppreſſing any part of his family, vindicate the oppreſſed, and reſtrain and puniſh the oppreſſor.

Unhappy the people who are deſtitute of the bleſſing promiſed in our text ; who have not the ulterior powers of government within themſelves ; who depend upon the will of another State, with which they are not incorporated as a vital part, the intereſt of which muſt in many reſpects be oppoſite to their own ; and who at the ſame time have no fixed conſtitutional barrier to reſtrain this reigning power : There is no meanneſs or miſery to which ſuch a people is not liable : There is not a ſingle bleſſing, tho' perhaps indulged to them for a while, that they can call their own ; there is nothing they have not to dread. Whether the governing power be itſelf free or deſpotic, it matters not to the poor dependent. Nations who are jealous of their own liberties often ſport with thoſe of others ; nay, it has been remarked, that the dependent provinces of free ſtates have enjoyed leſs freedom than thoſe belonging to deſpotic powers. Such was our late diſmal ſituation, from which Heaven hath redeemed us by a ſignal and glorious revolution. We thought, indeed, we had a charter to ſup-

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port our rights ; but we found a written charter, a thin barrier againſt all-prevailing power, that could conſtrue it to its own purpoſe, or reſcind it by the ſword at its own pleaſure.

Upon our preſent independence, ſweet and valuable as the bleſſing is, we may read the inſcription, *I am found of them that ſought me not.* Be it to our praiſe or blame, we cannot deny, that when we were not ſearching for it, it happily found us. It certainly muſt have been not only innocent but laudable and manly, to have deſired it even before we felt the abſolute neceſſity of it. It was our birth right ; we ought to have valued it highly, and never to have received a *meſs of pottage*, a ſmall temporary ſupply, as an equivalent for it. Going upon the trite metaphor of a mother country, which has ſo often been weakly urged againſt us, like a child grown to maturity, we had a right to a diſtinct ſettlement in the world, and to the fruits of our own induſtry ; and it would have been but juſtice, and no great generoſity, in her who ſo much boaſted her maternal tenderneſs to us, had ſhe not only readily acquieſced, but even aided us in this ſettlement. It is certain, however, that we did not ſeek

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an independence; and it is equally certain that Britain, though ſhe meant to oppoſe it with all her power, has by a ſtrange infatuation, taken the moſt direct, and perhaps the only methods that could have eſtabliſhed it. Her oppreſſions, her unrelenting cruelty, have driven us out from the family of which we were once a part: This has opened our eyes to diſcern the ineſtimable bleſſing of a ſeparation from her; while, like children that have been inhumanly treated and caſt out by their parents, and at the ſame time are capable of taking care of themſelves, we have found friendſhip and reſpect from the world, and have formed new, advantageous, and honorable connections.

Independence gives us a rank among the nations of the earth, which no precept of our religion forbids us to underſtand and feel, and which we ſhould be ambitious to ſupport in the moſt reputable manner. It opens to us a free communication with all the world, not only for the improvement of commerce, and the acquiſition of wealth, but alſo for the cultivation of the moſt uſeful knowledge. It naturally unfetters and expands the human mind, and prepares it for the impreſſion of the moſt exalted vir-

tues, as well as the reception of the moſt important ſcience. If we look into the hiſtory and character of nations, we ſhall find thoſe that have been for a long time, and to any conſiderable degree dependent upon others, limited and cramped in their improvements; corrupted by the court, and ſtained with the vices of the ruling ſtate; and debaſed by an air of ſervility and depreſſion marking their productions and manners. Servility is not only diſhonorable to human nature, but commonly accompanied with the meaneſt vices, ſuch as adulation, deceit, falſhood, treachery, cruelty, and the baſeſt methods of ſupporting and procuring the favour of the power upon which it depends.

Neither does the time allow, nor circumſtances require, that I ſhould enter into a detail of all the principles and arguments upon which the right of our preſent eſtabliſhment is grounded. They are known to all the world; they are to be found in the immortal writings of *Sidney* and *Locke*, and other glorious defenders of the liberties of human nature; they are alſo to be found, not diſhonored, in the acts and publications of America on this great occaſion, which have the approbation and applauſe of the wiſe and impartial among mankind, and

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even in Britain itſelf: They are the principles upon which her own government and her own revolution under William the third were founded; principles which brutal force may oppoſe, but which reaſon and ſcripture will forever ſanctify. The citizens of theſe States have had ſenſe enough to comprehend the full force of theſe principles, and virtue enough, in the face of uncommon dangers, to act upon ſo juſt, ſo broad, and ſtable a foundation.

It has been ſaid, that every nation is free that deſerves to be ſo. This may not be always true: But had a people ſo illuminated as the inhabitants of theſe States, ſo nurtured by their anceſtors in the love of freedom; a people to whom divine Providence was pleaſed to preſent ſo fair an opportunity of aſſerting their natural right as an independent nation, and who were even compelled by the arms of their enemies to take ſanctuary in the temple of Liberty; had ſuch a people been diſobedient to the heavenly call, and refuſed to enter, who could have aſſerted their title to the glorious wreaths and peculiar bleſſings that are no where beſtowed but in that hallowed place?

It is to the diſhonor of human nature, that Liberty, wherever it has been planted and flouriſhed, has commonly required to be watered with blood. Britain, in her conduct towards theſe States, hath given a freſh proof of the truth of this obſervation. She has attempted to deſtroy by her arms in America, what ſhe profeſſes to defend by theſe very arms on her own ſoil. Such is the nature of man, ſuch the tendency of power in a nation as well as a ſingle perſon. It makes a perpetual effort to enlarge itſelf, and preſſes againſt the bounds that confine it. It loſes by degrees all idea of right but its own; and therefore that people muſt be unhappy indeed, who have nothing but humble petitions and remonſtrances, and the feeble voice of a charter to oppoſe to the arms of another nation, that claims A RIGHT TO BIND THEM IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER.

Poor Genoa! ſays an author* who expoſes with great energy and ſpirit the idea of receiving as the gift of a deſpot, by a written charter, a title to the rights of human nature, and to which all men are born; "Poor Genoa! wherefore ſhouldeſt thou be vain of exhibiting a charter of privileges given thee by one Berenger: Conceſſions of privileges

* Voltaire.

leges are but titles of ſervitude: The true Charter of Liberty is *Independency ſupported by Force.*—It is with the point of the ſword the diplomas that ratify this natural right muſt be ſigned. Happy Switzerland! To what placart oweſt thou thy Liberty? To thy courage, thy firmneſs, thy mountains. But hold—— I am your Emperor. "We do not chuſe you ſhould be any longer ſo." But your fathers were my father's ſlaves. "It is for that reaſon their children will not be your's." But I have a right by dignity.— "And we have a right by nature. When did the Seven United Provinces become poſſeſſed of this inconteſtable right? From the moment they united; and from that moment Philip II. became the Rebel."

Heaven and *earth* can bear witneſs that theſe States are innocent of the blood that hath been ſhed, and the miſeries diffuſed by this unrighteous war. We have ſtood upon the ground of juſtice, honor, and liberty, and acted meerly a defenſive part. Not unreaſonable in our demands, not violent in our councils, not precipitate in our conduct, our "moderation has been known to all men;" and without refuſing a ſingle claim that Britain could in equity make

make upon us, our perſons, our property, our rights have been invaded in every ſtep that led to this revolution. I do not wiſh that this ſhould be taken for granted barely upon our own declaration. Without appealing to foreign nations, whoſe conduct towards us demonſtrates what opinion they form of our principles and meaſures; we have an acknowledgment of the truth of this aſſertion from Britain itſelf; from men of approved wiſdom, integrity and candor; from ſome of the firſt characters, and brighteſt ornaments in her own government; from innumerable ſpeeches in her Parliaments, and from ſolemn proteſts in her Houſe of Lords.

Allow me particularly to mention on this occaſion the letters of Mr. HARTLEY, member of the Britiſh Houſe of Commons for Hull, to his conſtituents; in which he gives a detail of the meaſures of that government reſpecting America, and upon which he ſays;—"Thinking, as I have always thought, that the FOUNDATION and PROSECUTION of the war againſt America has been unjuſt, I have taken ſome pains to lay open thoſe inſidious arts which miniſters have practiſed, that I may

may contribute my feeble efforts to vindicate my country at large from ſo grievous a charge as that of ſupporting an unjuſt cauſe, knowing it to be unjuſt." In another place, he ſays, " When all thoſe tranſactions ſhall come hereafter to to be reviſed in ſome cooler hour, I am confident there is not a man with a Britiſh heart who will not ſay, that in the ſame circumſtances he would have acted as the Americans have done." He goes on, " What had the Americans to look to after the refuſal of their laſt petition, but to ſeek for ſhelter in their own ſtrength and Independence? They were cut off from all poſſible communication with their ſovereign and their mother country; and the firſt act of the ſecond ſeſſion of parliament was to caſt them out of all national and parliamentary protection; to ſend 20,000 German mercenaries againſt them; to incite an inſurrection of negroes againſt their maſters, and to let looſe the Indian Savages upon their innocent and unarmed back ſettlers, and upon defenceleſs women and children. They had petitioned and addreſſed; they had diſclaimed every idea of independence; in return for which adminiſtration ſends againſt them an army of 50,000 men. Now let miniſters

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anſwer to God and their country for the blood which they have ſhed. The blood of thouſands of their fellow creatures, wilfully and premeditatedly ſhed in an unjuſt cauſe, will be required at their hands; who have taken their full ſtretch of vengeance, in their attempts to deſtroy and to lay waſte to the utmoſt of their malignant power the lives, liberty, property, and all the rights of mankind."

Nothing can be more full to the point than this acknowledgment from a gentleman of ſuch diſtinguiſhed character: He imputes indeed the whole to the miniſters, but as it was all adopted and authoriſed by the whole Britiſh government, it became an act of the nation in general; though many worthy individuals, with himſelf, abhorred the injuſtice and cruelty.

In the proteſt of the Lords, againſt the prohibitory bill, the diſſentient Peers ſay, "We are preparing the minds of the Americans for that Independence we charge them with affecting, whilſt we drive them to the *neceſſity* of it by repeated injuries." "I rejoice that the Americans have reſiſted," ſaid Lord Chatham in parliament; a ſhort but full teſtimony from that great man

man to the juſtice of our cauſe.

Thus are we acquitted from the guilt of all this blood that "crieth from the ground," by the public declarations of many of the wiſeſt and beſt men in Britain; men who perfectly knew all the meaſures of her government, and all that could be offered to juſtify them, being themſelves a part of this government: Men deeply verſed in natural and political law, capable of forming the trueſt judgment upon ſo important a point, and who cannot be ſuſpected of partiality in our favour. With all this juſtice on our ſide, we ſtill put our cauſe to great hazard by delaying to declare ourſelves a ſeperate nation, even after Britain had with her own hands violently broken every bond of union.

By this conduct of our enemies, Heaven hath granted us an ineſtimable opportunity, and ſuch as has been rarely if ever indulged to ſo great a people: An opportunity to avail ourſelves of the wiſdom and experience of all paſt ages united with that of the preſent; of comparing what we have ſeen and felt ourſelves, with what we have known and read of others; and of chuſing for ourſelves, unencumbered with the

pretenſions of royal heirs, or lordly peers, of feudal rights, or eccleſiaſtical authority, that form of civil government which we judge moſt conducive to our own ſecurity and order, liberty and happineſs: An opportunity, though ſurrounded with the flames of war, of deliberating and deciding upon this moſt intereſting of all human affairs with calmneſs and freedom. This, in all it's circumſtances, is a ſingular event; it is hard to tell where another ſuch ſcene was ever beheld. The origin of moſt nations is covered with obſcurity, and veiled by fiction; the riſe of our own is open as it is honorable; and the new-born ſtate, may I not be allowed to ſay, is a "ſpectacle to men and angels". For as piety, virtue, and morals are not a little intereſted in government, ſuch a tranſaction has an aſpect upon both worlds; and concerns us not only as members of civil ſociety upon earth, but as candidates for "the city of the living God, the Jeruſalem on high".

Happy people! who not awed by the voice of a maſter; not chained by ſlaviſh cuſtoms, ſuperſtitions, and prejudices, have deliberately framed the conſtitution under which you chuſe to live; and are to be

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ſubject to no laws, by which you do not conſent to bind yourſelves. In ſuch an attitude human nature appears with it's proper dignity; On ſuch a baſis, life, and all that ſweetens and adorns it, may reſt with as much ſecurity as human imperfection can poſſibly admit: In ſuch a conſtitution we find a country deſerving to be loved, and worthy to be defended. For what is our country? Is it a ſoil of which, tho' we may be the preſent poſſeſſors, we can call no part our own? or the air in which we firſt drew our breath, from which we may be confined in a dungeon, or of which we may be deprived by the ax or the halter at the pleaſure of a tyrant? Is not a country a conſtitution—an eſtabliſhed frame of laws; of which a man may ſay, "we are here united in ſociety for our common ſecurity and happineſs. Theſe fields and theſe fruits are my own: The regulations under which I live are my own; I am not only a proprietor in the ſoil, but I am part of the ſovereignty of my country". Such ought to be the community of men, and ſuch, adored be the goodneſs of the ſupreme Ruler of the world, ſuch, at preſent is our own country; of which this day affords a bright evidence, a glorious recognition.

To the disappointment of our enemies, and the joy of our friends, we have now attained a settled government with a degree of peace and unanimity, all circumstances considered, truly surprizing. The sagacity, the political knowledge, the patient deliberation, the constant attention to the grand principles of liberty, and the mutual condescention and candor under a diversity of apprehension respecting the modes of administration, exhibited by those who were appointed to form this constitution, and by the people who ratified it, must do immortal honor to our country. It is, we believe, "an happy foundation for many generations"; and the framers of it are indeed the *Fathers* of their country; since nothing is so essential to the increase, and universal prosperity of a community, as a constitution of government founded in justice, and friendly to liberty. Such men have a monument of glory more durable than brass or marble.

I need not enlarge before such an audience upon the particular excellencies of this constitution: How effectually it makes the people the keepers of their own liberties, with whom they are certainly safest: How nicely it poizes the powers of government,

ment, in order to render them as far as human foreſight can, what God ever deſigned they ſhould be, powers only to do good: How happily it guards on the one hand againſt anarchy and confuſion, and on the other againſt tyranny and oppreſſion: How carefully it ſeparates the legiſlative from the executive power, a point eſſential to liberty: How wiſely it has provided for the impartial execution of the laws in the independent ſituation of the judges; a matter of capital moment, and without which the freedom of a conſtitution in other reſpects, might be often deluſory, and not realized in the juſt ſecurity of the perſon and property of the ſubject.

In addition to all this, what a broad foundation for the exerciſe of the rights of conſcience is laid in this conſtitution! which declares, that "no ſubject ſhall be hurt, moleſted, or reſtrained in his perſon, liberty or eſtate, for worſhipping God in the manner and ſeaſon moſt agreeable to the dictates of his own conſcience, or for his religious profeſſion or ſentiments; and that every denomination of chriſtians, demeaning themſelves peaceably, and as good ſubjects of the commonwealth, ſhall be equally

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under the protection of the law, and no ſubordination of any one ſect or denomination to another ſhall be eſtabliſhed by law." It conſiders indeed morality and the public worſhip of God as important to the happineſs of ſociety: And ſurely it would be an affront to the people of this ſtate, as the convention ſpeak in their previous addreſs, "to labor to convince them that the honor and happineſs of a people depend upon morality; and that the public worſhip of God has a tendency to inculcate the principles thereof, as well as to preſerve a people from forſaking civilization, and falling into a ſtate of ſavage barbarity".

Of theſe, and other excellent properties of our preſent conſtitution, the citizens of this ſtate are throughly ſenſible, or well informed, and jealous as they are of their rights, they never would have adopted and ratified it with ſo great a degree of unanimity. They know it is framed upon an extent of civil and religious liberty, unexampled perhaps in any country in the world, except America. This muſt highly endear it to them; and while it is written upon their own hearts, they have the ſatisfaction to find that it has already received the elo-

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giums of others, whoſe capacity and diſtinction render their teſtimony truly honorable. But leſt thro' the imperfection of human nature, and after all the deliberation and caution with which it has been formed and approved, ſome inconveniences ſhould be found lurking in it, of which experience can beſt inform us, a right is expreſsly reſerved to the people of removing them in a reviſion of the whole, after a fair experiment of fifteen years.

When a people have the rare felicity of chuſing their own government, every part of it ſhould firſt be weighed in the balance of reaſon, and nicely adjuſted to the claims of liberty, equity and order; but when this is done, a warm and paſſionate patriotiſm ſhould be added to the reſult of cool deliberation, to put in motion and animate the whole machine. The citizens of a free republic ſhould reverence their conſtitution: They ſhould not only calmly approve, and readily ſubmit to it, but regard it alſo with veneration and affection riſing even to an enthuſiaſm, like that which prevailed at Sparta and at Rome. Nothing can render a commonwealth more illuſtrious, nothing more powerful, than ſuch a

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manly, ſuch a ſacred fire. Every thing will then be ſubordinated to the public welfare ; every labour neceſſary to this will be chearfully endured, every expence readily ſubmitted to, every danger boldly confronted.

May this heavenly flame animate all orders of men in the ſtate ! May it catch from boſom to boſom, and the glow be univerſal ! May a double portion of it inhabit the breaſts of our civil rulers, and impart a luſtre to them like that which ſat upon the face of Moſes, when he came down from the holy mountain with the tables of the Hebrew conſtitution in his hand ! Thus will they ſuſtain with true dignity the firſt honours, the firſt marks of eſteem and confidence, the firſt public employments beſtowed by this new commonwealth, and in which they this day appear. Such men muſt naturally care for our ſtate ; men whoſe abilities and virtues have obtained a ſanction from the free ſuffrages of their enlightned and virtuous fellow citizens. Are not theſe ſuffrages, a public and ſolemn teſtimony that in the opinion of their conſtituents, they are men who have ſteadily acted upon the noble princi-

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ples on which the frame of our government now reſts?—Men who have generouſly neglected their private intereſt in an ardent purſuit of that of the public—Men who have intrepidly oppoſed one of the greateſt powers on earth, and put their fortunes and their lives to no ſmall hazard in fixing the baſis of our freedom and honour. Who can forbear congratulating our riſing State, and caſting up a thankful eye to Heaven, upon this great and ſingular occaſion, the eſtabliſhment of our Congregation; our Nobles freely choſen by ourſelves; and our Governour coming forth, at the call of his country, from the midſt of us?

Behold the man, whoſe name as Preſident of Congreſs, authenticates that immortal act, which, in form, conſtitutes the Independence of theſe United States, and by which *a nation* was literally *born in a day*! See Him, who had taken too early and decided a part, and done too much for the liberties of America, to be forgiven by it's enemies! See Him, whoſe name, with that of another diſtinguiſhed patriot,* was expreſsly excepted from a Britiſh act of grace, and upon whoſe head a price was

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* The Honorable SAMUEL ADAMS, Eſq;

virtually bid by thoſe who meant to enſlave us: Behold this very man, declared by the voice of his country, "the head of the corner" in our political building; the firſt Magiſtrate of this free Commonwealth. It was not in the power of his fellow-citizens to give an higher teſtimony how well they remember the generous and important ſervices he has already rendered to his country, and how much they confide in his diſpoſition and abilities ſtill to ſerve it.

May God Almighty take his Excellency and the other honourable branches of the government, the Lieutenant-Governour, the Council, the Senate, and Houſe of Repreſentatives into his holy protection, and unite them in meaſures glorious to themſelves, and happy to their country! Veſted as they are with particular honours, they have a painful preheminence: Their diſtinctions call them to the moſt weighty and important cares, at a time when the adminiſtration of public affairs is attended with peculiar difficulties. They need therefore the gracious direction and aſſiſtance of the "bleſſed and only Potentate," which, in this ſolemn aſſembly of rulers and people, we jointly and devoutly implore.

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The people of a free State have a right to expect from thoſe whom they have honoured with the direction of their public concerns, a faithful and unremitting attention to theſe concerns. He who accepts a public truſt, pledges himſelf, his ſacred honour, and by his official oath appeals to his God, that with all good fidelity, and to the utmoſt of his capacity he will diſcharge this truſt. And that Commonwealth which doth not keep an eye of care upon thoſe who govern, and obſerve how they behave in their ſeveral departments, in order to regulate its ſuffrages upon this ſtandard, will ſoon find itſelf in perplexity, and cannot expect long to preſerve either its dignity or happineſs.

Dignity of conduct is ever connected with the happineſs of a State; particularly at its riſe, and the firſt appearance it makes in the world. Then all eyes are turned upon it; they view it with attention; and the firſt impreſſions it makes are commonly laſting. This circumſtance muſt render the conduct of our preſent rulers peculiarly important, and fall with particular weight upon their minds. We hope from their wiſdom and abilities, their untainted integrity and unſhaken firmneſs, this new

formed Commonwealth will riſe with honour and applauſe, and attract that reſpect, which the number and quality of its inhabitants, the extent of its territory and commerce, and the natural advantages with which it is bleſt, cannot fail, under a good government, to command.

From our preſent happy eſtabliſhment we may reaſonably hope for a new energy in government; an energy that ſhall be felt in all parts of the State: We hope that the ſinews of civil authority through its whole frame will be well braced, and the public intereſt in all its extended branches be well attended to; that no officer will be permitted to neglect the duties, or tranſgreſs the bounds of his department; that peculations, frauds, and even the ſmaller oppreſſions in any office, will be watchfully prevented, or exemplarily puniſhed; and that no corruption will be allowed to reſt in any part of the political body, no not in the extremeſt, which may ſpread by degrees, and finally reach the very vitals of the community.

Righteouſneſs, ſays one of the greateſt politicians and wiſeſt princes that ever lived, "Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation." This

maxim

maxim doth not barely reſt upon his own but alſo on a divine authority ; and the truth of it hath been verified by the experience of all ages.

Our civil rulers will remember, that as piety and virtue ſupport the honour and happineſs of every community, they are peculiarly requiſite in a free government. Virtue is the ſpirit of a Republic ; for where all power is derived from the people, all depends on their good diſpoſition. If they are impious, factious and ſelfiſh ; if they are abandoned to idleneſs, diſſipation, luxury, and extravagance ; if they are loſt to the fear of God, and the love of their country, all is loſt. Having got beyond the reſtraints of a divine authority, they will not brook the control of laws enacted by rulers of their own creating. We may therefore rely that the preſent Government will do all it fairly can, by authority and example, to anſwer the end of its inſtitution, that the members of this Commonwealth may *lead a quiet and peaceable life in all* GODLINESS as well as *honeſty*, and our liberty never be juſtly reproached as licentiouſneſs.

I know there is a diverſity of ſentiment reſpecting the extent of civil power in religious

gious matters. Inſtead of entering into the diſpute, may I be allowed from the warmth of my heart, to recommend, where conſcience is pleaded on both ſides, mutual candour and love, and an happy union of all denominations in ſupport of a government, which though human, and therefore not abſolutely perfect, is yet certainly founded on the broadeſt baſis of liberty, and affords equal protection to all. Warm parties upon civil or religious matters, or from perſonal conſiderations, are greatly injurious to a free State, and particularly ſo to one newly formed. We have indeed leſs of this than might be expected: We ſhall be happy to have none at all; happy indeed, when every man ſhall love and ſerve his country, and have that ſhare of public influence and reſpect, without diſtinction of parties, which his virtues and ſervices may juſtly demand. This is the true ſpirit of a Commonwealth, centring all hearts, and all hands in the common intereſt.

Neither piety, virtue, or liberty can long flouriſh in a community, where the education of youth is neglected. How much do we owe to the care of our venerable anceſtors upon this important object! Had not they laid ſuch foundations for

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training up their children in knowledge and religion, in ſcience, and arts, ſhould we have been ſo reſpectable a community as we this day appear? Should we have underſtood our rights ſo clearly? or valued them ſo highly? or defended them with ſuch advantage? Or ſhould we have been prepared to lay that baſis of liberty, that happy conſtitution, on which we raiſe ſuch large hopes, and from which we derive ſuch uncommon joy? We may therefore be confident that the ſchools, and particularly the univerſity, founded and cheriſhed by our wiſe and pious fathers, will be patronized and nurſed by a government which is ſo much indebted to them for its honour and efficacy, and the very principles of its exiſtence. The preſent circumſtances of thoſe inſtitutions call for the kindeſt attention of our rulers; and their cloſe connection with every public intereſt, civil and religious, ſtrongly enforces the call.

The ſciences and arts, for the encouragement of which a new foundation* hath lately been laid in this Commonwealth, deſerve the countenance and particular favour of every government. They are not only ornamental but uſeful: They not only

* The American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

only poliſh, but ſupport, enrich, and defend a community. As they delight in liberty, they are particularly friendly to free States. Barbarians are fierce and ungovernable, and having the groſſeſt ideas of order, and the benefits reſulting from it, they require the hand of a ſtern maſter; but a people enlightened and civilized by the ſciences and liberal arts, have ſentiments that ſupport liberty and good laws: They may be guided by a ſilken thread; and the mild puniſhments proper to a free State are ſufficient to guard the public peace.

An eſtabliſhed honour and fidelity in all public engagements and promiſes, form a branch of righteouſneſs that is wealth, is power, and ſecurity to a State: It prevents innumerable perplexities: It creates confidence in the government from ſubjects and from ſtrangers: It facilitates the moſt advantageous connections: It extends credit; and eaſily obtains ſupplies in the moſt preſſing public emergencies, and when nothing elſe can obtain them: While the want of it, whatever benefits ſome ſhort-ſighted politicians may have promiſed from deluſive expedients, and deceitful arts, renders a State weak and contemptible; ſtrips

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it of its defence; grieves and provoke its friends, and delivers it up to the will of its enemies. Upon what does the power of the Britiſh nation chiefly reſt at this moment? That power that has been ſo unrighteouſly employed againſt America? Upon the long and nice preſervation of her faith in all monied matters. With all her injuſtice in other inſtances, meer policy hath obliged her to maintain a fair character with her creditors. The ſupport this hath given her in frequent and expenſive wars, by the ſupplies it has enabled her to raiſe upon loan, is aſtoniſhing. By this her government hath availed itſelf of the whole immenſe capital of the national debt, which has been expended in the public ſervice, while the creditors content themſelves with the bare payment of the intereſt. It may be demonſtrated that the growing reſources of theſe ſtates, under the conduct of prudence and juſtice, are ſufficient to form a fund of credit for proſecuting the preſent war, ſo ruinous to Britain, much longer than that nation, loaded as ſhe now is, can poſſibly ſupport it.

But need I urge, in a chriſtian audience, and before chriſtian rulers, the importance of preſerving inviolate the public faith?

If this is allowed to be important at all times, and to all ſtates, it muſt be peculiarly ſo to thoſe whoſe foundations are newly laid, and who are but juſt numbered among the nations of the earth. They have a national character to eſtabliſh, upon which their very exiſtence may depend. Shall we not then rely that the preſent government will employ every meaſure in their power, to maintain in this commonwealth a clear juſtice, an untainted honour in all public engagements; in all laws reſpecting property; in all regulations of taxes; in all our conduct towards our ſiſter ſtates, and towards our allies abroad.

The treaty of alliance and friendſhip between HIS MOST CHRISTIAN MAJESTY and theſe ſtates, is engraved on every boſom friendly to the rights and independence of America. If fidelity dwells in ſuch boſoms, it will be conſpicuous on every occaſion of performing our own part of theſe ſacred ſtipulations. The intereſt is indeed mutual, as was openly confeſſed: The treaty is therefore natural, and likely to be laſting. But mutual intereſt doth not always baniſh generoſity; a proof of which our illuſtrious Ally hath given in this compact; a proof not unapplauded in Europe, tho' particularly

ly felt and acknowledged in America. I will not affront either the underſtanding or the feelings of this reſpectable audience, by attempting formally to demonſtrate that we have received great advantages and ſupport from this friendſhip. It is impoſſible we ſhould forget the firſt pledge of it, in the ſquadron ſent to our aid under the orders of that vigilant, active and intrepid commander the COUNT D'ESTAING; who greatly diſconcerted the deſigns of the enemy, and did every thing for us that wiſdom and valour, in his ſituation, could perform. Nor need I call your attention to that important armament lately arrived to our aſſiſtance, under leaders of diſtinguiſhed abilities, and the moſt eſtabliſhed military reputation. France, tho' a monarchy, has been the nurſe and protectreſs of free republics. Switzerland among others can atteſt to this: Her free States can atteſt, that during an alliance with France of more than three hundred years, their liberties have been conſtantly befriended by that nation, and every part of the treaty for their ſupport punctually performed. This they have acknowledged in a late ſolemn renewal of the alliance. An happy omen to theſe States, whoſe circumſtances are in many reſpects ſimilar to thoſe of the united cantons of Switzerland.

The perſonal and royal accompliſhments of LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH are known and admired far beyond his own extended dominions, and afford the brighteſt proſpect to his ſubjects and allies. The reign of this monarch diffuſes new ſpirit through his kingdom, and gives freſhneſs to the glory of France. A Britiſh author, in his account of the regulations which took place after this prince had aſcended the throne, calls him "a paternal and patriotic ſovereign, who wherever he appears is loaded with the bleſſings of his ſubjects." The celebrated Mr. Burke, in his ſpeech before the Britiſh Houſe of Commons on February laſt, adds his own teſtimony to this, when ſpeaking of ſome reforms in the finances and the court of France, he ſays, "The miniſter who does theſe things is a great man, but the prince who deſires they ſhould be done, is a far greater: We muſt do juſtice to our enemies; theſe are the acts of a PATRIOT KING". The friendſhip of ſuch a monarch muſt be valuable indeed!

The other great and powerful branch of the houſe of Bourbon, the king of Spain, tho' not at preſent formally allied to us, is yet evidently engaged in our cauſe, by the union of his arms with thoſe of France.

We

We cannot be wanting in the ſentiments due to the amity and aid of ſo reſpectable a potentate. May God Almighty bleſs theſe Princes, and their dominions; and crown their arms, and thoſe of America, with ſuch ſucceſs as may ſoon reſtore to a bleeding world the bleſſings of peace!

Peace, peace, we ardently wiſh; but not upon terms diſhonourable to ourſelves, or dangerous to our liberties; and our enemies ſeem not yet prepared to allow it upon any other. At preſent the voice of providence, the call of our ſtill invaded country, and the cry of every thing dear to us, all unite to rouze us to proſecute the war with redoubled vigour; upon the ſucceſs of which all our free conſtitutions, all our hopes depend. I need not enumerate the former or more recent events of the war, and the favours or chaſtiſements of heaven ſent to us in theſe events: They are known to you; they cannot be forgotten: God grant they may be properly improved! Thro' his aid, amidſt all our miſtakes and errors, we have already done great things; but "our warfare is not yet accompliſhed": And our rulers, we hope, like the Roman General, will think nothing done, while any thing remains undone.

We

We have depended too much upon partial meaſures, temporary expedients, ſhort and interrupted efforts made only upon the ſpur of the occaſion. An army eſtabliſhed in proper numbers, for the whole duration of the war, and ſeaſonably furniſhed with all neceſſary ſupplies, is now univerſally acknowledged of the utmoſt conſequence to the liberties of America. Particular attention will certainly be paid to the recommendations of this great object from the Commander in chief—that illuſtrious man, formed by heaven for the important truſt he ſuſtains, and to draw to a point the confidence of theſe free ſtates, and a patriotic army. Part of the gladneſs of this day riſes from the general expectation, that our new government will give new vigour to the meaſures neceſſary to this momentous purpoſe; that theſe meaſures will be inſtantly purſued, and without that delay we have too much experienced in times paſt; and which, at this ſeaſon, muſt prove greatly diſtreſſing, if not fatal to our country.

Can we heſitate a moment at the burden and expence? It is impoſſible. Why have the citizens of America been framing ſuch wiſe and excellent conſtitutions, if they meant not to maintain, but leave them to become the ſport of their enemies? If after all the

memorable

memorable things we have done to repel lawleſs power, and eſtabliſh our rights; if after all we have endured in a war ſavagely conducted by our enemies; if after the rank we have taken, and the reputation we have acquired as an independent nation, we ſhould now relax in our efforts, and ſuffer tyranny finally to prevail, who can bear to think of the conſequences, or to look upon the picture imagination preſents? In ſuch a reverſe, we may write upon this fair region the inſcription given to an antient dungeon.—"You who enter here, leave behind you every hope". What would not this people do; what exertions would they not make, rather than ſubmit to ſuch debaſement and miſery? It is with you, our civil fathers, to direct ſuch a ſpirit, and ſuch exertions, in a manner the moſt effectual to the ſalvation of our country.

What heroes have bled, what invaluable lives have been offered up to redeem us from ſlavery, and place us on a free conſtitution? Their names will never die: Their honours will never wither. Among theſe we ſee a WARREN, and a MONTGOMERY: Liberty wept over their tombs; and there would have remained inconſolate, had ſhe not beheld a ſucceſſion of patriots and

warriors

warriors riſing in the ſame ſpirit. Rights retrieved with ſuch blood as hath flowed from the veins of America in our great cauſe, muſt certainly be held by us at an ineſtimable price, and improved to the greateſt advantage; nor can any thing ſhew their value in a clearer light, than a good adminiſtration of our free governments.

Our preſent rulers, as principal founders of the conſtitution, cannot but regard it with parental tenderneſs. They cannot but love their own offspring, eſpecially when it has features and charms to attract the love and admiration of the world: And hoping that their names and their glory may long live in ſuch an offspring, they have an irreſiſtible motive to guard againſt every thing that may weaken or deform it; every thing that may render its exiſtence ſhort, precarious, or diſhonourable.

The ſame kind of motive muſt excite the body of the people to the ſame care. It is with you alſo my fellow-citizens, by whoſe appointment this conſtitution was framed, and who have ſolemnly acknowledged it to be your own; it is with you to give life and vigour to all its limbs freſhneſs and beauty to its whole complexion; to guard it from dangers; to

preſerve

preſerve it "from the corruption that is in the world;" and to produce it upon the great theatre of nations with advantage and glory. We have now a government free indeed; but after all, it remains with the people, under God, to make it an honourable and happy one: This muſt ultimately depend upon the prudence of their elections, and the virtue of their conduct. A government framed by ourſelves for our own benefit, and according to the faireſt models of our own minds, and adminiſtred by men of our own choice, ought to be more deeply reſpected, and more religiouſly ſupported by us than any kind of impoſed authority. Having defined and adjuſted its powers by our own deciſions, and made thoſe who are veſted with ſuch as are improper to be long continued in the ſame hands, amenable, at ſhort intervals, to the judgment of the people, we never can allow it too much weight and energy; we only ſupport ourſelves in ſupporting ſuch authority: While to oppoſe or weaken it, or bring it under an undue influence, is with the hand of a parricide to deſtroy order, liberty, and happineſs. Upon this general principle, and to eſtabliſh a dignity and independence, where they muſt forever operate to the benefit of the community,

the citizens of this State have by their preſent Conſtitution, moſt freely and wiſely ſecured to their chief Magiſtrate, and the Juſtices of the ſupreme judicial Court, permanent and honourable ſalaries ; an article which, we cannot doubt, will be ſacredly obſerved in the true ſpirit of the Conſtitution.

In a word, if the Rulers and the People act throughout in this ſpirit ; if they mutually watch over and ſuſtain each other ; and thoſe virtues are cultivated among us which ſupport and are ſupported by a free Republic, our new Government will then open with the moſt happy omens, and the commencement of it will be the æra of our riſing felicity and glory.

While we receive in the ſettlement of our Commonwealth a reward of our atchievements and ſufferings, we have the further conſolation to reflect, that they have tended to the general welfare, and the ſupport of the rights of mankind. The ſtruggle of America hath afforded to oppreſſed Ireland a favourable opportunity of inſiſting upon her own privileges : Nor do any of the powers in Europe oppoſe our cauſe, or ſeem to wiſh it may be unſucceſsful. Britain has maintained her

naval

naval ſuperiority with ſuch marks of haughtineſs and oppreſſion as have juſtly given umbrage to the nations around her: They cannot therefore but wiſh to ſee her power confined within reaſonable bounds, and ſuch as may be conſiſtent with the ſafety of their own commercial rights. This, they know would at leaſt be exceeding difficult, ſhould the rapidly increaſing force of theſe States be reunited with Britain, and wielded by her, as it hath been in time paſt, againſt every nation upon whom ſhe is pleaſed to make war. So favourable, through the divine ſurperintendence, is the preſent ſituation of the powers in Europe, to the liberties and independence for which we are contending. But as individuals muſt part with ſome natural liberties for the ſake of the ſecurity and advantages of ſociety; the ſame kind of commutation muſt take place in the great republic of nations. The rights of Kingdoms and States have their bounds; and as in our own eſtabliſhment we are not likely to find reaſon, I truſt we ſhall never have an inclination to exceed theſe bounds, and juſtly to excite the jealouſy and oppoſition of other nations. It is thus wiſdom, moderation and ſound policy would connect Kingdoms and States for their mutual advantage, and preſerve the order and harmony

of the world. In all this theſe free States will find their own ſecurity, and riſe by natural and unenvied degrees to that eminence, for which, I would fain perſwade myſelf, we are deſigned.

It is laudable to lay the foundations of our Republicks with extended views. Rome roſe to empire becauſe ſhe early thought herſelf deſtined for it. The great object was continually before the eyes of her ſons: It enlarged and invigorated their minds; it excited their vigilance; it elated their courage, and prepared them to embrace toils and dangers, and ſubmit to every regulation friendly to the freedom and proſperity of Rome. They did great things becauſe they believed themſelves capable, and born to do them. They reverenced themſelves and their country; and animated with unbounded reſpect for it, they every day added to its ſtrength and glory. Conqueſt is not indeed the aim of theſe riſing States; ſound policy muſt ever forbid it: We have before us an object more truly great and honourable. We ſeem called by heaven to make a large portion of this globe a ſeat of knowledge and liberty, of agriculture, commerce, and arts, and what is more important than all, of chriſtian piety and virtue. A celebrated

brated Britiſh hiſtorian obſerves, if I well remember, that the natural features of America are peculiarly ſtriking. Our mountains, our rivers and lakes have a ſingular air of dignity and grandeur. May our conduct correſpond to the face of our country! At preſent an immenſe part of it lies as nature hath left it, and human labour and art have done but little, and brightened only ſome ſmall ſpecks of a continent that can afford ample means of ſubſiſtence to many, many millions of the human race. It remains with us and our poſterity, to "make the wilderneſs become a fruitful field, and the deſert bloſſom as the roſe;" to eſtabliſh the honour and happineſs of this new world, as far as it may be juſtly our own, and to invite the injured and oppreſſed, the worthy and the good to theſe ſhores, by the moſt liberal governments, by wiſe political inſtitutions, by cultivating the confidence and friendſhip of other nations, and by a ſacred attention to that goſpel that breaths "peace on earth, and good will towards men." Thus will our country reſemble the new city which St. John ſaw "coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her huſband." Is there a benevolent ſpirit on earth, or on high, whom ſuch a proſpect would not delight?

But

But what are thoſe illuſtrious forms that ſeem to hover over us on the preſent great occaſion, and to look down with pleaſure on the memorable tranſactions of this day? Are they not the founders and lawgivers, the ſkilful pilots and brave defenders of free States, whoſe fame "flows down through all ages, enlarging as it flows"? They, who thought no toils or vigilance too great to eſtabliſh and protect the rights of human nature; no riches too large to be exchanged for them; no blood too precious to be ſhed for their redemption?——But who are they who ſeem to approach nearear to us, and in whoſe countenances we diſcern a peculiar mixture of gravity and joy upon this ſolemnity? Are they not the venerable Fathers of the Maſſachuſetts; who though not perfect while they dwelt in fleſh, were yet greatly diſtinguiſhed by an ardent piety, by all the manly virtues, and by an unquenchable love of liberty——They, who to form a retreat for it, croſſed the ocean, through innumerable difficulties, to a ſavage land: They, who brought with them a broad Charter of Liberty, over which they wept when it was wreſted from them by the hand of power, and an inſidious one placed in its room. With what

what pleaſure do they ſeem to behold their children, like the antient ſeed of Abraham, this day reſtored to their original foundations of freedom! their Governor "as at the firſt, and their Councellors as at the beginning"? Do they not call upon us to defend theſe foundations at every hazard, and to perpetuate *their* honour in the liberty and virtue of the State they planted?

O thou ſupreme Governor of the world, whoſe arm hath done great things for us, eſtabliſh the foundations of this Commonwealth, and evermore defend it with the ſaving ſtrength of thy right hand! Grant that here the divine conſtitutions of Jeſus thy Son may ever be honoured and maintained! Grant that it may be the reſidence of all private and patriotic virtues, of all that enlightens and ſupports, all that ſweetens and adorns human ſociety, till the ſtates and kingdoms of this world ſhall be ſwallowed up in thine own kingdom: In that, which alone is immortal, may we obtain a perfect citizenſhip, and enjoy in its completion, "the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God!——And let all the people ſay, AMEN!

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